

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4
TAGS: SHUM PINS PROP LA VM
SUBJECT: ALLEGED VIETNAMESE CONTROL OF AND ATROCITIES AT NAM NGUM
REEDUCATION CAMPS

1. A UNUSUALLY WELL INFORMED FRENCH SOURCE TELLS US
THAT VIETNAMESE FORCES HAVE TAKEN ACTIVE CONTROL OF
THE REHABILITATION CAMPS IN THE NAM NGUM RESERVOIR
CONSISTING OF DONE THAO, DONE NANG AND OTHER ISLANDS
WHICH THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS VISITED EARLIER THIS YEAR.

2. SOURCE SAID VIETNAMESE ELEMENTS PERFORMED ALMOST
ALL ADMINISTRATIVE AND GUARD DUTIES FOR THE PAST SIX
TO TEN MONTHS, MAINTAINING A FACADE OF LAO ADMINISTRA-
TION FOR THE BENEFIT OF VISITORS. HE SAID THAT LAO
ADMINISTRATORS DID NOT SPEND THE NIGHT ON THE ISLANDS
BUT RATHER ON THE MAINLAND, LEAVING THE CAMP COMPLETE-
LY UNDER VIETNAMESE ARMY CONTROL AT NIGHT. HE SAID
THE VIETNAMESE REGIME WAS A HARD ONE AND CITED THE
FOLLOWING ALLEGED EXECUTIONS:

A) DECEMBER 28,1976: A 19 YEAR OLD LAO WHO HAD
TRIED TO ESCAPE SEVERAL TIMES WAS IMPALED BEFORE 800
INMATES OF THE CAMP WHO WERE OBLIGED TO WATCH DURING

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 VIENTI 01080 210716Z

THE TWO HOURS IT TOOK HIM TO DIE BETWEEN 1700 AND 1900
HOURS.

B. NOVEMBER 24,1976: A 13 YEAR OLD BOY WHO HAD
TRIED TO ESCAPE THREE TIMES WAS KILLED BY VIETNAMESE
WHO ALMOST DECAPITATED HIM WITH A BURST FROM AN AK47
WEAPON. AT A SEMINAR THE NEXT DAY LAO-SPEAKING VIET-

NAMESE SAID THAT THE ELEMENTS OF THE POPULATION WHICH WERE NOT SALVAGEABLE SHOULD BE GOTTEN RID OF.

3. HE SAID EXECUTIONS WERE FREQUENT, RUNNING BETWEEN TWENTY AND THIRTY PER MONTH, INVOLVING THOSE WHO ATTEMPTED TO ESCAPE. PUNISHMENT OF SPREAD-EAGLING PEOPLE IN THE SUN WAS ALSO COMMON. THIS PUNISHMENT WAS PRACTICED IN SAM KHE PRISON, FOR EXAMPLE. THERE HAD BEEN CASES OF "NOYADES" OR GROUP DROWNINGS. DIFFICULT CASES (PEOPLE WHO REPEATEDLY TRIED TO ESCAPE) WERE INVITED TO SWIM FOR THE MAINLAND, BEING PROMISED THAT IF THEY MADE IT THEY WOULD BE FREE. MANY DROWNED. THE FEW WHO MADE IT ESCAPED AND JOINED THE "MEOS".

4. SOURCE'S INFORMANT SAID IT WAS STRIKING THAT PRISONERS FORCED TO WATCH EXECUTIONS REMAINED COMPLETELY IMPASSIVE, SHOWING NO REACTION WHATEVER.

5. SURCE ESTIMATED THERE WERE 56 CONCENTRATION CAMPS IN LAOS CONTAINING BETWEEN 37,000 AND 38,000 LAO INMATES. HE SAID THEY COULD BE DIVIDED INTO THREE GENERAL CATEGORIES. THE FIRST, INCLUDING CAMPS AT PHONG SALY AND LUANG NAM THA, WERE THE WORST. THEY WERE PRACTICALLY EXTERMINATION CAMPS AND ALL THEIR INMATES WOULD BE DEAD IN ABOUT TWO YEARS. THEY THERE
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 VIENTI 01080 210716Z

WERE ORDINARY CONCENTRATION CAMPS LIKE THOSE AT VIENG SAY, WHICH WERE LESS HARSH. FINALLY, THERE WERE WORK CAMPS POPULATED BY SUCH PEOPLE AS FORMED ROYAL ARMY NCOS, WHICH WERE IN TURN LESS HARSH AND FROM WHICH THERE WERE SOME ESCAPES.

6. SOURCE ESTIMATED THERE WERE 40,000 VIETNAMESE IN LAOS WITH THE ASSIGNMENT OF IMPOSING THE NEW SYSTEM ON ABOUT THREE MILLION LAO. HE SAID THIS WAS A HIGHER PROPORTION OF CADRES ENGAGED IN THIS SORT OF WORK RELATIVE TO THE TOTAL POPULATION THAN WAS THE CASE IN SOUTHERN VIETNAM. HE THOUGHT THEREFORE THAT SOME EARLIER SPECULATION TO THE EFFECT THAT THE REVOLUTION WOULD BE SOFTER IN LAOS THAN IN VIETNAM WOULD TURN OUT TO BE INACCURATE.

7. COMMENT: A UNITED NATIONS OFFICIAL QUOTED A FRENCH DOCTOR MAY 30 AS SAYING THAT THE DOCTOR HAD TOLD HIM THAT HE HAD RECEIVED FIRST HAND REPORTS OF BRUTAL INCIDENTS AT DONE THAO, DONE NANG, OFFERING AS AN EXAMPLE REPORTS THAT PRISONERS CAUGHT TRYING TO ESCAPE WERE IMPALED AS WARNINGS TO OTHER PRISONERS. (IT IS

POSSIBLE THAT THE FRENCH DOCTOR WAS THE SOURCE OF
REPORT PARA 2.)

8. RECOMMENDATION: THAT DEPARTMENT REPEAT THIS
MESSAGE TO CINCPAC, CIA, DIA. CORCORAN

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NNN

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